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1. At 0930, 26 December 1971, a SAR was declared for Nail 30. Last radio contact was made with Nail 30 at 0630. At 0640, Falcon flight reported a smoke trail and white smoke puff near LD-22/Bon Kari Pass area. A search was started in the sector WD 6040, XD 6040, YE 6020, WE 6020.
2. At 1147, Nail 28 reported positive radio contact for 30 seconds with Nail 30 and requested cuts be made by a Pave Nail. Nail 28 reported 6 rounds of 100MM accurate AAA which was probably radio guided.
3. At 1210, the SARCO briefed TFA and requested assistance. Jolly Green 56 and 60 and Sandy 05 and 06 were alerted and briefed but held on the ground as no SAR objective had been declared. Nail 30 was responding to a request for tone but the signal was too weak for ADF cuts.
4. At 1217, Blue Chip said hold all FACs on the ground until released by Blue Chip. A later telecon revealed that this was a Blue Chip mistake.
5. At 1220, the SARCO started uploading BLU-52 on two A-1s at Jack's request. At 1235, this request was cancelled due to the threat in the area. At this time, the SARCO requested BLU-52, CBU-42, and CDU 14 be loaded on fast movers and put on ground alert. The SARCO also briefed Jack on ingress and egress plan.
6. At 1515, Jack launched Sandy 05 and 06 and Jolly Green 60 and 56 to the SAR area. Sandy 09 and 10 and Jolly Green 30 and 62 were placed on ground alert. Continued attempts to get Nail 30 to come up voice were unsuccessful. The SARCO confirmed with Jack the Mig Cap, College Eye, Iron Hand, and ECM aircraft were in the SAR area. Blue Chip had released Sandy 03 and 04 from Pakse orbit but the SARCO recovered 03 and 04 because they had not been adequately briefed on the SAR area. Nail got position from beeper and several needle swings. (XDJ229 9863)
7. Sandy 03 made a thorough search of the SAR area at low level below the clouds but found nothing. Nail 30 did not respond to specific requests on the radio.
8. With no objective, SAR forces were recovered and electronic search continued. Subsequent electronic search strengthened the possibility of a trap as questions were answered wrong using beeper and no voice contact be established. Nail 30 was later reported as a POW by the NVA.

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(C) An unsuccessful SAR was conducted for Mail 30 who was last contacted in the air in the vicinity of San Karai Pass at 0630 on 26 December 1971. A smoke trail and a puff of smoke was reported by F-4s in the area at 0600, and a SAR was declared at 0900 when no contact had been established for three hours. No SAR aircraft were launched until 1515 hours due to lack of an identified objective for recovery.⁷¹

(C) At about noon of the 26th a signal from Mail 30 was received by Mail 28 who was in the San Karai Pass area. Mail 28 received six rounds of accurate 70mm AAA fire from the area soon afterward. A request for a Dave Mail to record an accurate location of the signals was then made by Mail 28 while the SAR forces on the ground remained ready for the time that a location was determined.⁷²

(C) The SAR forces, consisting of two Sandys and two Jolly Greens, were launched at 1515. They proceeded to the designated location southeast of San Karai Pass where they were briefed by Mail 28 as to the beeper contacts that may have come from Mail 30. No voice contact had been made, but a fix was obtained from the beeper contacts.⁷³

(C) Sandy 05 was directed by Mail 16 to the area from

71. SARCO Report for Mail 30, 26 Dec 71, (Dec 19).

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

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where the signals had come. The aircraft was not in sight in layers under the aircraft but Sandy 05 worked his way down through several holes in the clouds while Sandy 06 held overcast. There was very limited room to maneuver below the clouds, but a search was conducted at from 200 to 500 feet of the objective area with the help of vectors from Navy Mail 16. The objective area was searched for 30 minutes without seeing evidence of a parachute, wreckage, or a survivor. Attempts to contact Mail 30 on radio were made during this period with no response. The search was widened until it came near an area known as the Dog's Head where known AAA positions were located. In that area and other altitude Sandy 05 encountered AAA explosions close enough around the A-1 to be felt inside the cockpit. At that point the search was discontinued, and the SAR forces returned to base for lack of a known objective.⁷⁴

(C) Mail aircraft continued to try to communicate with Mail 30 and some beeper contacts were made, but questions asked by the Mails were not answered correctly on the beeper. There was a strong possibility that the beeper was being used to send an aircraft into a trap where AAA or heavy ground fire would be encountered. This suspicion was strengthened soon afterwards when Mail 30 was identified as a Prisoner of War of the North Vietnamese.⁷⁵

74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.

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1. Sandy 05/06 were launched at 1405Z, 26 Dec 71 to search for Nail 30. We went to the objective area, southeast of Ban Kari pass, accomplished a rendezvous and with Nail 23 and Nail 16 (Pave Nail). They briefed us on the area and the beeper/voice contact they had had. There was no radio contact at all with Nail 30 during the time we were in the area. Nail 28 left the area shortly after we arrived.
2. The Pave Nails had taken several cuts on the beeper and felt they had a good fix on its location. The weather was overcast to the south and east of the beeper location with a clear area over Delta 22 (the Dog's Head), which was clearly visible. There were breaks in the overcast near Delta 22. Nail 16 briefed us on the AAA/SNI threat in the area and on a road (not shown on our maps) which ran close to the beeper location.
3. After the briefing Nail 16 took me to a place where he had found a hole in the overcast, east of the objective area. The hole had begun to cover over with thin clouds but it appeared to be workable. I held Sandy 06 above the overcast due to the weather and anticipated limited maneuvering room below the clouds. I went down through the thin spot and found multiple layers of clouds. It was not possible to continue to the ground in the same hole but I was able to find successive holes, or thin spots, in each cloud layer until I was finally able to see the ground. The first time I got under the overcast I was able to stay about 2 minutes before heading up a blind valley and having to climb out IFR.
4. This was repeated about three times before I was able to become oriented shortly after breaking out and had learned which valleys I could fly through VFR. Most of the valleys were too narrow to turn around in. On my second trip down I jettisoned my M-47s and CBU-22 to increase maneuverability and rate of climb. I felt there was little chance of using smoke due to the terrain and low ceilings.
5. I finally managed to get into the area by having Nail 16 give me DF steers. The objective area was just across the ridge line east of the Dog's Head. The main road, mountainside, and bombed out ridge line were clearly visible from below the clouds. I had Nail 16 DF me into the area three times from different while I was under the clouds. Each pass started about 3 miles out -- as far as I could get without going IFR or into the Dog's Head area. Each time he told me I was in the survivor's area, I was within 200 meters of the same place.
6. I began a search pattern about 1 1/2 miles by 3/4 mile looking for a parachute, marker panels wreckage, or any sign of Nail 30. My search area was limited by kharst and clouds to the East, North, and South and by the Dog's Head to the West. The terrain was rolling hills and kharst,

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partly covered with relatively light jungle (single canopy) alternating with old farm fields that were covered with relatively light second growth. There was one stream through the area, about 15 to 20 yards wide, and a secondary road that wandered through the area. The road was unpaved but well used and clearly defined. I saw no people although they were obviously in the area. There were numerous trails and both banks of the stream had foot trails and areas where the grass and brush had been beaten down.

7. I covered the area repeatedly but could find no sign of a parachute or Nail 30. After about 30 minutes in the area, with Sandy 05 and Nail 16 telling me to get out, I extended my search pattern slowly toward the Dog's Head, using terrain matching as best I could. I continued to work in that direction until I took some AAA as I was turning away from the Dog's Head. The blasts were close enough I could feel the explosions and see them out of the corner of my eye. With that I gave it up, went southeast a mile or two and climbed out. Most of the search was conducted at 200 to 500 feet above the ground. I made continual calls on Guard but got no response on keypad or voice. I saw no evidence of a parachute, wreckage, or a survivor. I am convinced that if the survivor was in my search area he had been previously captured and his parachute picked up.

8. Shortly after climbing back up and describing what I had seen to King and Nail 16, I was released to RTR while the Nails continued to make a communications search for the survivor. I recommended to King that the communications search continue but that no one else go back down unless there was further evidence of a survivor. I felt extremely lucky that they had not moved a ZPU or 23/37s into the area as I repeatedly crossed the road at low altitude. It is doubtful if anyone would have been as lucky the next day.

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Sandy 05

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Vietnam War Aircraft Losses

1429	26 Dec 1971	F-4D	NVN	Stolz L. G.	Capt	KIA		Koons D F.	1Lt	KIA
1430	26 Dec 1971	OV-10A	LAOS	Guenther L. E.	Capt	POW (returned)				
1431	31 Dec 1971	F-4D	LAOS	Duggan W. Y.	Maj	KIA		Sutter F. J.	Capt	MIA
1432	20 Jan 1972	RF-4C	LAOS	u	u	Rescued	AA Helo	u	u	Rescued
1433	20 Jan 1972	F-4E	LAOS	Davis O. J. Jr	Capt	Rescued	Army Helo	Venables R. K.	Capt	Rescued
1434	10 Feb 1972	F-4E	LAOS	Murphy J. S.	Capt	Rescued		Dobson T. W.	1Lt	Rescued
1435	16 Feb 1972	F-4D	Sea	Schwertfeger W. R.	Capt	POW (returned)		Galati R. W.	1Lt	POW (retur
1436	17 Feb 1972	O-2	u	Christy R. W.	1Lt	KIA		Silva W. E.	SSgt	Rescued
1437	17 Feb 1972	F-105G	Sea	Cutter J. D.	Capt	POW (returned)		Fraser K. J.	Capt	POW (retur
1438	17 Feb 1972	F-4	NVN	Irwin R. H.	Maj	MIA		Hawley E. A.	Capt	POW (retur
1439	2 Mar 1972	OV-10A	LAOS	Long M. H.	Capt	Rescued				
1440	6 Mar 1972	F-4E	LAOS	Howell C. A.	1Lt	KIA		Rusch S. A.	1Lt	MIA
1441	14 Mar 1972	OV-10A	LAOS	Hardy A. H.	1Lt	MIA				
1442	18 Mar 1972	OV-10A	LAOS	Breskman D. G.	1Lt	Rescued	USAF Helo	Boretsky S. L.	Capt	Rescued
1443	18 Mar 1972	A-1J	LAOS	Faas M. J.	Capt	Rescued	AA Helo			
1444	23 Mar 1972	F-4D	LAOS	Whitt J. E.	Maj	KIA		Jackson J. T.	Capt	KIA
1445	28 Mar 1972	AC-130A	LAOS	Ramsower I. B.	Maj	MIA		Wanzel C. J.	1Lt	MIA
1446	30 Mar 1972	C-130E	LAOS	Fulk W. O.	Capt	Rescued		Bolling E. N.	Capt	Rescued
1447	2 Apr 1972	O-2A	Sea	Abbot R. L.	1Lt	Rescued	USN			
1448	2 Apr 1972	EB-66C	SVN	Bolte W. L.	Maj	MIA		Hambleton I. E.	LtCol	Rescued
1449	3 Apr 1972	OV-10A	SVN	Henderson W. J.	1Lt	POW (returned)		Clark M. N.	1Lt	Rescued
1450	7 Apr 1972	OV-10A	SVN	Walker B. C.	1Lt	MIA		Potts L. F.	1Lt2	MIA
1451	9 Apr 1972	F-4D	LAOS	Banks W. M. Jr	Capt	Rescued		Jacobs M. J.	Capt	Rescued
1452	15 Apr 1972	F-4E	NVN	Trimble L. A.	1Lt	KIA		Despiegler G. A.	Maj	POW (retur